

KULDHARA IN JAISALMER STATE – SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE REMAINS OF A MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

S. ALI NADEEM REZAVI (AM 14322)

The abandoned medieval site of Kuldhara (26°52' North Latitude and 70°47' East Latitude) is located in District Jaisalmer, Rajasthan (see Map I), 5 kilometers off Jaisalmer-Sam Road. Jaisalmer is situated about 18 kms to its north-east.

The author with the late Mr. Rajiv Sharma¹ undertook an exploration of the site in September 1993, followed by a survey conducted during March 1995, a brief report of which was presented at the ASHA session at Kurukshetra in 1995,² entitled "Surveying a 17th-18th Century Settlement in the Rajasthan Desert-Kuldhara, District Jaisalmer." Later, in November 1995, another field-trip was made to the site in order to study a number of minor inscriptions which abound in the area.³ The present paper is based on these surveys and findings.

Aligned in a north-south direction (842 m. long and 261 m. wide), the site of Kuldhara (KLD) is longitudinally divided by five roads (R), three of which (i.e. RI, RII and RIII) are comparatively wide and run the entire length of the township (see Plan I and II). Horizontally KLD is cut through narrow lanes (L) which connect one road with another (see Plan III). On RII, RIII, RIV, open spaces or *chauk* are also encountered.⁴ The whole township revolves around an almost centrally located temple which appears to be dedicated to Mother Goddess (see Plan IV). The township has a total of around 410 structures, residential and administrative, which line both the right (A) and left (B) sides of the roads (see Plan II). The remains of a city wall are only encountered towards the north and the south. Towards the west, the back-walls of the structures and the river-bed appears to have taken care of the defence. The eastern side of the township facing the dry-river bed of Kakni, appears to be open.

Lakshmi Chand, the author of *Tawarikh-i Jaisalmer*, informs us that Kuldhara village was first settled by a Paliwal whose name was Kadhan.⁵ A tank (*talao*) named Udhansar at Kuldhara was also dug by him.⁶ According to the same author, the Paliwal Brahmans were

originally the inhabitants of 'Garh Nanuna' where they were famous as Nanwana Brahmans. From there they migrated to the Pali area in Marwar.⁷

According to Crooke, it was around A.D. 1156 when Sihaji, "the founder of the Rathaur dynasty and son of the King of Kanauj" caused the flight of the Paliwal Brahmans from Pali.⁸ Tod, on the other hand, believed that the cause of their migration from Pali was a Muslim invasion of Marwar due to which a war-contribution was imposed on them by the local ruler. When they refused to pay, they were punished and ultimately banished from their home territory.⁹

A bardic poem, *Pallivala-Chhand* possibly of the 16th or 17th century mentions that in Vikram Samvat 1330 (AD 1273), a fearful battle was fought between Siha Rathod and 'Nasuradin' (possibly Nasiruddin Mahmud Shah I of Delhi), at Pali, and the Paliwal Brahmans "after quitting Pali moved towards the west."¹⁰

The Paliwal Brahmans after leaving their native-place appear to have slowly moved and settled in the regions of Jaisalmer, Marwar, Bikaner, Dhat, Barmer and Sindh.¹¹ A large number of them also settled in the Pokaran area.¹² It however seems that the largest number of these Paliwala settled in Jaisalmer territory. A total number of 84 villages, locally known as Khera were settled by them, which, says Lakshmi Chand, had a total of "20,000 houses".¹³ These settlements stretched "40 kos to the East, 25 kos to the South, 25 kos to the West and 30 kos to the North of the city (Jaisalmer)."¹⁴ The most important of these Paliwal settlements in Jaisalmer appear to be Kuldhara, Jajiya, Khaba, in the south-east and Kathodi¹⁵ on the north of Jaisalmer town. While tabulating the villages of the 17 *parganas* of Jaisalmer in 1890, Lakshmi Chand lists only 64 (out of the alleged 84) Paliwal villages,¹⁶ of which 21 (including Kuldhara) were in *Pargana* Jaisalmer,¹⁷ 9 in *Pargana* Kot Fatehgarh,¹⁸ 7 in *Pargana* Khaba,¹⁹ 21 in *Pargana* Devi,²⁰ 4 in *Pargana* Nokh,²¹ and one each in *Pargana* Khuiyala²² and Lakha.²²

The Paliwals' first extant monument, a temple, dating back to a period not later than A.D. 15th century, is located at a place known as Mandal or Mandhai near the Jaisalmer-Barmer border.²³

Whatever their date of migration from Pali, from two (see Appendix A) *devali* (cenotaph) inscriptions it appears that at least by early 13th century the Paliwals started settling at Kuldhara. The first inscription records the death of a Brahman ("Vrahman") in Bhattik Samvat 612 (i.e. A.D. 1235) (see plate (e). Another cenotaph-inscrip-

tion records the year of death of a resident of Kuldhara as Bhatik Samvat 615 (i.e. A.D. 1238).²⁴

Although the Paliwals were the Kanaujiya division of the Panch-Gaur sub-caste of the Brahmins,²⁵ yet the cenotaph inscriptions mention neither the term 'Paliwal' nor 'Gaur'. However, what appears clearly from these inscriptions is that the settlers at Kuldhara from its establishment, down to its desolation in the 19th century were invariably Brahmins (*Vrahmans*, *Vaman*). In a number of inscriptions (see Appendix A) the term which appears is "Kuldhar" or "Kaldhar". This term is sometimes preceded by the term "jati".²⁶ In one inscription the caste described is "*Vrahman Kuldhar jati Mudgal*" (i.e. Kuldhara Brahman, sub-caste Mudgal).²⁷ In yet another, the description is "*Vrahman Govindni jati Kuldhar Lohar-thi*".²⁸ (Brahman Govindni, the sub-caste of whom is Kuldhara Lohar-thi).

From this it would appear that 'Kuldhar' was the name of a sub-caste of the Paliwal Brahmins, who being the chief settlers gave their caste name to the settlement itself.²⁹ The other sub-castes (*jati*) of the Paliwal settlers at Kuldhara, as mentioned in the cenotaph-inscriptions,³⁰ are :

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Harjal | 5. Jisutiya | 9. Saharan |
| 2. Harjalu | 6. Lohar-thi | 10. Jag |
| 3. Harjaluni | 7. Lahthi | 11. Kalsar |
| 4. Mudgal | 8. Lakhar | 12. Mahajalar |

Some of the inscriptions also mention the *gotr* of the Brahmin settlers of Kuldhara,³¹ viz:

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------|
| 1. Asamar | 2. Sutdhana | 3. Gargvi | 4. Gago |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------|

One inscription also mentions the *kul* viz. Gonali of a Brahmin settler.³² Among the non-brahmins we find mention of two Sutradhars (architects) viz. Dhanmag³³ and Sujo Gopalna.³⁴

From these inscriptions it also appears that these Kuldhara Brahmins invariably married women of their own caste.³⁵ However the *jati* of the husband and wife would mostly differ. Thus a Brahmin whose *jati* was Kuldhara married a woman whose *jati* was Harjalu.³⁶ Another Brahmin who was of Mudgal *jati* and Sutdhana *gotr* married a woman who was a Brahmin of Lahthi *jati*.³⁷

During the course of our survey three cremation grounds viz. C1, C2 and C3 (see Map I & plates (a) & (b)) were located. Interestingly,

although the earliest and the latest cenotaph-stones were located in C2 (which also appears to be the largest of the three), C1 appears to have a wider representation of *jatis*. In C1 we find the cenotaph-platform of a certain Brahman Narain who was a "dehli" or agriculturist.³⁸ In C2 there is the cenotaph of a person designated "Mahajal Lalan" (Caretaker of the lake/tank). Can we thus explain C1 to have been the cremation ground of the richer traders and agriculturists and C2 to be that of the bureaucratic class? A study of the three cremation grounds does reveal some sort of social-stratification among these Kuldhara settlers. A majority of these cenotaphs are in the shape of a pillar erected from the ground. These stones are about 3 to 4 ft in height and adorned with the sculpture in relief of a male and a female deity. A few are adorned with either a male or a female deity. However in C2 one encounters a number of very tall pillars, about 10 ft high which invariably have only a male deity adorning their crown. Then we have a third category, which again is sizeable. The cenotaph stone in this case is raised on top of a square platform. The platforms are around 2.5 ft high and 5 to 8 ft in length and breadth. At C2 however one encounters quite large platforms. Yet another type of *devalis* are in the form of *chhatris* or square kiosks with a pyramidal roof on top of square platforms. One encounters five *chhatris* at C1 and two at C2. At C3 we have only one such *chhatri*. The last type of a *devali* is in the form of a miniature temple with a pillar inscription having the idols placed inside it. The stone of the cenotaph-pillar in such a *devali* is of a better quality. In C1 we have three such *devalis*, whereas in C3 we have only two. One such *devali* at C1 and III respectively has a different kind of idol. The crown of the pillar is divided into two panels. In one panel stand two females with folded hands, while in the second panel in C3 a male stands besides a platform on which sits a female with the prostate body of a male. In the second panel in the temple-*devali* in C1 a female stands besides the platform on which sits a male with a prostrate body of a male. [see plate (c)].

Thus one finds that at Kuldhara the *devalis* are of six kinds:

- (i) Cenotaph-stones
- (ii) Cenotaph-pillars
- (iii) *devali* in the form of ordinary platforms
- (iv) *devalis* in the form of large platforms
- (v) *devalis* in the form of *chhatris*

(vi) *devalis* in the form of miniature temples

These six categories were presumably representative of a similar categorization in Kuldhara society.

The composer of the *Pallival-Chhand*³⁹ writes that 13th century Pali was ruled by a Brahmin *rishi* Visahat. His subjects, including the warriors, were also mostly Brahmins. In C1 one of the miniature-temple *devalis*, which has two panels, occurs the name of a Kuldhara Brahmin of Mudgal *jati* and Asamar *gotr*. He died in Samvat 1777 (AD 1720). Was he, in the tradition of his ancestors in 13th century Pali, the headman of his community at Kuldhara?

Further light on social-stratification is thrown when we look at their residential structures. If one takes the material of construction into account then one can categorize the structures in three categories :

(a) Those which are constructed with stones rubble of the locally available fine-grained buff and yellow sand-stone. Such structures abound in the whole township.

(b) The structures are constructed with thin deep brown Jurassic stone rubble. These structures are mostly located from the extreme north to the middle of RI and the whole of RI I (see Plan II). Some structures near the temple are also of the same material.

(c) In a very few structures, instead of using stone-rubble or the thin Jurassic-stone rubble, semi-polished yellow buff stone blocks have been utilized as a medium of construction. Such material has been used in RIA-23, RIIA-39, RIIA-40, RIIA-45, RIIA-49, RIIA-51, RIIA-52, RIIA-53, RIIB-16, RIIB-41, RIIB-44, RIIB-45, RIIB-46, RIIB-47, RIVA-1, RIVA-2, RIIA-48, RIIB-27, RIIB-30, RIIB-31, RIIB-31, RIIB-32, RIIB-34 AND RIIB-35. It has also been partially utilized (only the outer walls of RIA-37, RIB-12 and RIIB-33).

When we look at Plan II, we realize that this third and the most superior category of residences is to be generally found towards the south of the township which was closest to the source of water, the River Kakni. Possibly these structures belonged to the influential strata of the society the administrators and the big merchants and farmers.

Further light is thrown on this issue when one looks at the plans of the various structures.

Generally, the Kuldhara residential structures appear to centre around the courtyard, at the extreme end of which was placed the

main chamber. The front door of the structure was generally fronted with a (in most cases) narrow raised platform (known in Jaisalmer as *otta*). Towards the right and left of the courtyard was constructed a verandah (*pathiyal*) raised with the help of crude stone-pillars. On both the sides (at times only on one side) of the central chamber, some small low-roofed cubicles were constructed. Such type of single courtyard and single chambered houses are the most commonly found structures at Kuldhara. They are around 64 to 80 sq. m. in area. These were possibly the residences of the general masses of Kuldhara.

On RI and RII we also encounter a few very small structures (for example RIA-34) comprising of a single small chamber squeezed at the end of a very narrow courtyard. It appears as if the space between two structures was roofed and cordoned off from the road with the help of a screen wall to form a single room apartment for a person with little means.⁴⁰

The section of the society which was comparatively better placed constructed houses whose main entrance, instead of opening directly into the courtyard, adjoined a small rectangular space, placed lateral to it, which acted as type of *deorhi* (*mora* in local parlance) and shielded the inner view of the house. This open space behind the main entrance usually had a small cubicle. Crude stones sometimes jutted out on one of its walls acting as stairs to reach the ceiling. Such houses are mostly located on RIB, RII and RIII. Some houses on RIA are also of this category. Adjoining these residential structures, a cow-pen is also sometimes encountered. Were these houses of the agriculturists who had amassed some wealth? Apart from the crude stairs, such houses sometimes also had windows, ventilation (e.g. see RIA-26) and large stone-shelves placed in the room and verandah walls.

A more superior class constructed houses which comprised two courtyards. These structures (see for example, RIIA-7) were divided into two portions. The main doorway, which was fronted with two medium sized platforms (used possibly for recreation), opened into a rectangular courtyard, around which were placed a number of rooms. A door from this courtyard would open into a *mora* (*deorhi*) leading to the inner courtyard. As in other general houses of Kuldhara, there was only a single main chamber at the extreme end of this courtyard, flanked with one or two cubicles on its sides. On the sides of this second courtyard fronting the main chamber were

the verandahs. Another room or two were constructed just besides the *deorhi*. In most of these structures a shallow water-trough (*nadi*) was placed at the door of the *deorhi* leading into the main courtyard.

Such houses are located generally towards the north on all the three major roads (RI, RII & RIII). They are also to be found in the area around the centrally located temple. They are generally 25 to 27 m. long and 13 to 15 m. wide (i.e. 325 sq.m. to 405 sq.m. in area). These magnificent structures probably housed the rich strata of the Kuldhara society. But interestingly enough, the material mostly used in their construction was of the first two categories discussed above (i.e. fine-grain buff and yellow sand-stone rubble and the deep brown Jurassic-stone rubble).

Around ten houses to the extreme north on RI(A), which fall in the above category have an added feature. A long, narrow and enclosed chamber constructed at the back provided with a small and low (French window type) opening. This was possibly the *Kothar* or *Kothadi* used as a storage. These were probably the dwellings of the rich traders and merchants. This view is strengthened by the fact that open spaces are provided (see Plan I & II) in front of these structures where bullock and camel-carts could easily have been parked. During the course of our survey a few stone-hooks and rings sunk into the ground, to which the animals could be tied, were located in areas between RIB-2 and RIB-3 and the open space on RII in front of RIIA 1-4 (just adjoining the RIIB-1) and between RIIB-1 and RIIB-2. The market area (*hat*) with temporary shops was situated near the north-west of the RI gate (see below).

The 'bureaucratic structures'⁴¹ and the houses of the administrators, who again were rich farmers and traders, built their houses with the semi-polished yellow buff-stone blocks as has been pointed out above. These structures made of superior quality building material were made on a plan similar to that of the previous category. Although they did not have the *Kothar* adjoining their back-wall, they had two other additional features - (a) the pillar-brackets and leaves had floral patterns carried on them. The pillars were also sometimes provided with beautifully carved bases. (b) In some of them (if not all)⁴² we also encounter basement rooms, constructed with the same semi-polished yellow buff stone blocks.

Interestingly enough, two structures at Kuldhara (RIIA-39 and

RIIA-45) which each comprise two courtyards and a basement and are constructed with the help of stone-blocks, have a three-tiered plinth. The central room of RIIA-39 is the highest structure in the whole township. Its upper-most plinth is as high as the roof of the structures around it. Were these structures the residence of the Kuldhara Brahmin of *jati* Mudgal and gotr Asamar (see Inscription 13) and another Brahmin (Inscription no.50) who died in 1720 and 1724 AD respectively, and whose miniature temple *devalis* were built in C1 & C3 and adorned with a superior marble stone pillar crowned with two panels? Possibly these two structures and *devalis* belonged to the two principal men of Kuldhara.

If we relate the information of the *devalis* and the residential structures, then we find that both of them were of six categories. As in life, so in death was their status differentiated. If the members of the high class lived in magnificent double-courtyard structures, after their death miniature-temples and Chhatris embraced their memorial stones and ashes.⁴³ A person passing his life in humble dwellings would have his memorial stone set simply on the ground. His status in life would determine his status at the last resting place.

If the idols carved on the memorial stones are taken to be an indication of the social milieu, it would appear that the males generally sported a beard and covered their heads with turbans which was of Mughal character. They wore a tunic (*jama*) and a waist-band (*kamar band*). Among the male ornaments, a necklace was quite common. He would also carry a small dagger (*khanjar*) tucked to his waist. He could also sport a conical cap, an *angwastra*, *kamar band* and the Brahmins' sacred thread (*janeu*). In this attire, the Brahmin would decorate his forehead with an elongated *tilak*. The women would wear either a long decorated tunic or just a multi-pleated *lahanga* without a blouse and a few necklaces. Their headgear was mostly conical.

Being Vaishnavites, the inhabitants of Kuldhara frequently invoke the name of Ram and adorned the side panels of the centralized temple with the sculptures of Mahisasura Mardini and Vishnu. Being basically traders, bankers and farmers, they adorned their gateways with a miniature sculpture of Lord Ganesha. Most of their inscriptions would start after invoking the name of this elephant god (*Sri Ganesa-i Namah*). They also appear to have been worshippers of bull and a local god/goddess riding a horse. According to

Tod, the Paliwals were the worshippers of the bridle of a horse.⁴⁴

The Kuldhara residents used pottery which was mostly of fine fabric, made up of well levigated clay. They were well-fired too giving a metallic sound when stuck together. This suggests sufficient knowledge and expertise of the Kuldhara potter. He decorated his vessels with simple geometrical patterns such as check, triangles and quadrangles. These designs were executed with the help of running straight or wavy black bands on the red vessels. This survey has revealed the sherds of storage jars, basins, vases, *handis* with globular sides and knobbed lids.

Among the social customs, we are informed that these Paliwal Brahmins did not celebrate the festival of *Raksha-bandhan*.⁴⁵ They are also said to have paid a bride-price to the father of the bride at the time of marriage.⁴⁶ According to the author of *Tawarikh*, the largest consumers of opium which was "imported from Kota and Malwa" were the Paliwals who held "*baro devta keshariya kanwar hai*" i.e. 'the greatest god is Prince opium'.⁴⁷ It was possibly the *chauks* on RI, RII and RIII which were the meeting places where these Paliwal residents could gather and indulge in their favourite pastime.

Our survey showed that there are 410 structures at Kuldhara proper and around 200 in its lower township.⁴⁸ Around ten of them are bureaucratic offices, and establishments. If we apply the general ratio of the 17th century Mughal India of five persons per household, then the population of the main township would come to 2000 persons during the 17th and 18th centuries. But then if we take into account the information on Paliwals provided by Lakshmi Chand in 1890, we find that the ratio of persons per house was lower :

TABLE-1⁴⁹

Pargana	Total No. of Paliwal Villages	Popu- lated villages	Total No. of Houses	Totoal Persons	Ratio
Jaisalmer	21	12	312	1292	4.14
Kot					
Fatehgarh	9	6	427	1919	4.49
Lakha	1	1	157	683	4.35
Khaba	7	3	102	342	3.35
Khuiyala	1	1	63	241	3.82
Devi	21	7	274	1016	3.70

Nokh	4	4	350	1211	3.46
Total	64	34	1685	6704	3.97

If we take this figure of 3.97 persons per household as correct and apply it on the 84 alleged *kheras* of Paliwals having 20,000 houses,⁵⁰ then the total population of the Paliwals in the Jaisalmer region during 17th-18th century would come to 79,400, and that of Kuldhara to 1,588. When Tod collected his data from "the best informed natives, which was made in the year 1815", he found that Kuldhara had 200 houses and 800 inhabitants⁵¹ (i.e. a ratio of 4 persons per house). This was the time when the flight of the Paliwals from Kuldhara had commenced. Ultimately, in 1890 we find that Kuldhara had further declined to 117 houses and 37 persons.⁵²

These Paliwal Brahmins were expert agriculturists, money-lenders and merchants and in a way the major mainstay of Jaisalmer economy.⁵³ Munshi Hardyal Singh writing in the late 19th century mentions a tradition current among the Paliwals of Marwar. According to him, they generally believed that at the time of their flight from Pali, those who left the town by the west-gate, took the profession of cultivation and those who passed through the eastern gate became bankers and merchants.⁵⁴ On reaching Jaisalmer they became not only equal in number to the Rajputs but far surpassed them in wealth.⁵⁵ Their wealth was such, writes Lakshmi Chand, that when one of the sons of Maharajah Jaswant Singh (d.1792) was betrothed to the daughter of the Maharana of Udaipur and the Maharana passed a comment on his financial viability, the Prince wrote a *hundi* of Rs.2 lakh on a *kothi* of a Paliwal of Kuldhara. On receiving the said *hundi*, the Paliwal commented, "I have a *dukan* in Mewar, from where you could have collected this amount. What was the need for you to despatch it here for such a paltry amount? All the same, take it from my *kothadi* in whatever coin (*sikka*) you need."⁵⁶

A survey of the site and its geographical location both point out the feasibility of both these activities.

The site is located near River Kakni (see Map I) which at this point bifurcates into two branches. One branch, which now is known as Masurdi Nadi, goes towards Khaba (around 18 km. west of Kuldhara) where it terminates and forms the Masurdi Khadeen, where, when the Paliwals used to dwell "9000 maunds of seeds (*bij*) could be cultivated."⁵⁷ The second branch of Kakni from Kuldhara

meandered its way towards Lodrava and ultimately fell in the "Rann".⁵⁸ This second branch has now been converted into a drain.

The water in this seasonal river would raise the ground water-table which could then be tapped by digging wells and step-wells, even after the river had dried up. On the eastern side of Kuldhara the survey revealed seven wells and a step-well (*baoli*) (see attached plates) most of which are at present non-functional and filled with sand and rubble. Two of the wells, one in the extreme north of the lower settlement and another, situated between the *baoli* and the main settlement [see attached plate (h)], though dry, are not filled with sand. An examination of these two wells revealed that they were of *kosita* (i.e. deep) variety. Their drums are dressed with alternating layers of rectangular stone blocks which would bear the pressure of the outer soil and sand, thus preventing the inner vertical wall from collapsing. At the ground level a rectangular platform was raised.

The step-well is located around 120 meters off the main settlement. It is aligned, like the settlement, in a north-south direction. The entrance to it is in the north from where a stepped corridor leads down to two storeys, the lower one of which is now covered with sand. On both the storeys and inside the square well of the *baoli* are carved the images of Lord Ganesh. A pillar inscription placed near the entrance of the *baoli* mentions Tejpal, a Kuldhara Brahmin, who constructed this "*baoli jal ki*" (water-well) in V.S. 1815 (1757 AD). A raised platform nearby appears to have been once a room for the custodian or watchman of this step-well.

By 1850, it appears that although most of the wells had dried up, the *baoli* and the two deep-wells (*bero*) were still functioning.⁵⁹

Apart from getting water directly from the river bed, the wells and the *baolis* for the purpose of irrigation and cultivation, the water of the river could be dammed to form a *Khareen*, as was done near Khaba. *Khareen* means an artificial depression created through human labour, dammed on three sides to collect water. This water, as it evaporates would create soil conducive for agriculture. It appears that most of the *Khareens* were constructed by the Paliwal Brahmins.⁶⁰ As the water dries up, *jowar*, wheat and gram could be grown.⁶¹ A *Khareen*, around 2.5 sq.km in area is located towards the south of Kuldhara.

Although we do not know what other crops were sown by the Kuldhara cultivators apart from wheat and *jowar* in their *Khareen*,

we know that in Jaisalmer region *moong* moth, cotton, and oil-plant apart from turmeric and barley were grown.⁶² Seeing the profit which the Paliwals were making from agriculture, Maharawal Akhay Singh (d.A.D. 1722) fixed an annual tax (*saliyana*) on them.⁶³ At least till A.D. 1815 at Kuldhara both Rabi and Kharif crops were being sown.⁶⁴ The area was such that it had been included in the Khalisa territory of the Jaisalmer state.⁶⁵

Although the land tax was one fifth to one sixth of the total produce in both the seasons, a little more was realized from the Paliwals during the Kharif.⁶⁶ The grain delivered in tax was purchased for money on the spot by the (mercantile) Paliwal Brahmins.⁶⁷

The grains produced at Kuldhara were not only consumed at the local level but also appear to have been carried to distant places by the merchants. Writing in late 19th century, Sherring calls the Paliwals of Bikaner "trading agriculturists".⁶⁸ Tod too writes of them that:

"Almost all the internal trade of the country passes through their hands, and it is chiefly with their capital that its merchants trade in foreign parts. They are the metayers of the desert, advancing money to the cultivators, taking the security of the crop; and they buy up all the wool and *ghi* (clarified butter) which they transport to foreign parts. They also rear and keep flocks."⁶⁹

This could have easily been possible from Kuldhara, as the township was on the route between Jaisalmer and Sindh.⁷⁰ A survey of the township also reveals that the northern district of Kuldhara was well-equipped to handle the carts of the caravans. The *kothars* in the houses on RI could store the merchandise and the large *khareen* with its extensive field produced enough to be carted to distant places. A sizeable *hat*, located in the north-west corner of the town,⁷¹ catered to the needs of the local merchants and pedlars. The survey revealed a number of platforms (which might have been used to display goods) and a *chhatri* around an oval pond (see Map). This *hat* is on the route from Kuldhara to Jajiya, Dedha and Khaba (Paliwal settlements) on one side and Munpiya and Damodara on the other. For miles around this is the only plain ground where a weekly market could be held in which merchants and buyers from the nearby villages could assemble.

If all was so well, why did the decline occur? Was it just due to the atrocities of the *Diwan*, Zalim Singh, in the early decades of the

19th century? It is possible, however, that failure of underground water supply might have been to blame. When the township was flourishing during the 17th & 18th centuries, there were at least five wells, two deep-wells and a massive *baoli*. In 1815 most of the wells had dried up. During the present century, although there are a few settlements nearby, yet the source of water is not a well but the stagnant water in some portions of the river bed. As the water-table went down and the sources of irrigation dried up, the productivity of the soil kept on diminishing. The state maintained its demand at the previous level. The Paliwal cultivators and traders would thus have had little choice but to abandon Kuldhara and migrate elsewhere.

NOTES

1. Rajiv Sharma. Lecturer in History, AMU, was actively involved in the Survey of the Paliwal Settlements in Jaisalmer along with the present author.
2. The Survey conducted was under the aegis of the Centre of Advanced Study in History, AMU. We were assisted by Mr. Muhammad Anis Alvi and Mr. Zameer Ahmad of the Archaeology Section of the Centre. The author is also beholden to Professor S.P. Gupta, our senior colleague at the Centre, for his useful advices.
3. This field-trip was also under the aegis of the Centre. I am thankful to Dr. S. Jabir Raza, Epigraphist, CAS in History, AMU.
4. For details, see S.A. Nadeem Rezavi & Rajiv Sharma, "Surveying a 17th-18th Century Settlement in the Rajasthan Desert - Kuldhara, District Jaisalmer", presented at the ASHA Session, Kurukshetra, 8-10 April 1995.
5. Lakshmi Chand : *Tawarikh-i Jaisalmer*, Ajmer, 1890, p.136.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p.240.
8. W. Crooke : *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western India*, Delhi, 1975, Vol. IV, p.110.
9. James Tod : *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, 1920, Vol. II, pp. 1254-55; also p.942.
10. Cf. D.R. Bhandarkar, "Bithu Inscription of Siha Rathod", *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XL, 1911, pp. 180-83. The text of the *Pallivala Chhand* is given on p.182.
11. Tod, *op.cit.*, p.1255; see also Munshi Hardyal Singh : *The Castes of Marwar*, Jodhpur, 1990, pp.90-91.
12. Muhnot Nainsi : *Marwar Pargana ki Vigat*, Jaipur, 1969, Vol. II, pp.327-355; out of a total of 28 inhabited villages in *pargana* Pokaran, Nainsi mentions that 9 were totally inhabited by the Paliwal Brahmans, while 5 had a mixed population of Paliwals and Rajputs, *ibid.*, p.317.

13. *Tawarikh-i Jaisalmer*, op.cit., p.240.
14. *Ibid.* One kos = 2.5 miles.
15. Laxmi Chand says that Kathodi, in *pargana* Devi was the foremost (*auwal*) of the 84 *Kheras* (settlements) of the Paliwals. *Ibid.* p.169.
16. *Tawarikh-i Jaisalmer*, op.cit., pp.128-41.
17. *Ibid.* pp.141-46.
18. *Ibid.* pp.152-54.
19. *Ibid.* pp.168-71.
20. *Ibid.* pp.175-82.
21. *Ibid.* pp.163-64.
22. *Ibid.* pp.146-48.
23. Sureshwaranand : *Art and Architecture of Jaisalmer*, Jodhpur, 1990. p.92.
24. The author has been able to decipher the dates and legends of 56 such *devalli* inscriptions, a large number of which are present in three separate cremation grounds around the Khadeen (see Map I).
25. Crooke, op.cit., Vol. IV, p.110.
26. See for example. Inscription nos. 9, 10, 16, 34, 40, 44, 45, 48, 51 and 52, given in Appendix A.
27. Inscription no. 13.
28. Inscription no. 16.
29. Other Paliwal settlements in district Jaisalmer which bear the name of a Paliwal sub-caste are Jagiya, Jagiya and Jisu. Jagiya lies around 3 km to the south of Kuldhara. Jagiya and Jisu are in *Pargana* Devi (*Tawarikh*, op.cit., p. 170). The first derived its name from the sub-caste 'Jag', the second from 'Jisutiya'.
30. See Appendix A.
31. Inscription nos. 13, 15, 25 and 34.
32. Inscription no. 24.
33. Inscription no. 8.
34. Sutradhar Sujogopalna occurs beneath a sculpture carved on the northern wall of the *garbh-griha* of the temple.
35. See also Tod, op.cit., p.1255.
36. Inscription no. 45.
37. Inscription no. 25.
38. Inscription no. 7.
39. *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XL, 1911, p.182.
40. Cf. with Verse 102 of *Pallivala Chhand*: "When a new and poor (*nidhan*) Brahman came from outside, he was given by each family one brick to build a house with"; (*The Indian Antiquary*, 1911, op.cit., p.182).
41. For details see S.A. Nadeem Rezavi and Rajiv Sharma, op.cit., for details.
42. A proper clearing of the rubble and sand and some excavation can bring to light the exact number of basement rooms. We could peep into only two such rooms in RIIA-39 and RIIB-16. Possibly RIIA-45 also had a sub-terraneous chamber.

43. The survey revealed that beneath the pillars were buried small earthen pots containing the relics of the dead.
44. Tod, *op.cit.*, II, p.1255. During the course of the survey two sculptures of the bull and a large number of a deity riding a horse with a bridle and stirrup were found. This deity is in a dancing *mudra* and holds a sword and a shield in his hands.
45. *The Castes of Marwar, op.cit.*, p.91.
46. Tod, *op.cit.*, II, p.1255, Crooke, *op.cit.*, IV, p.110.
47. *Tawarikh-i Jaisalmer, op.cit.*, p.247.
48. We have so far not been able to exhaustively survey the lower township (see Map 1) which like the main settlement is rectangular aligned in a North-South direction. It has two main roads. The house structures are similar to the general houses at the main settlement. It appears that this lower township is of a later origin and might belong to late 18th and 19th century.
49. Based on *pargana* and village-wise break-up given in *Tawarikh*, pp. 128-82.
50. *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, p.240.
51. Tod, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p.1245.
52. *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, p.136.
53. *Ibid.*, p.140. See also Sureshwaranand, *op.cit.*, p.90-93; N.K. Sharma : *Jaisalmer ka Samajik va Sanskritik Itihas*; Jaipur, 1992, pp. 25-41; Crooke, *op.cit.*, Vol. VI, p.110.
54. *The Castes of Marwar, op.cit.*, p.91.
55. M.A. Sherring : *The Tribes and Casts of the North-Western India*, Delhi, 1975 (first pub. 1896), p.22; Tod, *op.cit.*, II, p.1254; *Tawarikh*, p.140.
56. *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, pp.64-65.
57. *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, p.205.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, p.136.
60. K.D. Erskine : *Rajputana Gazetteers, The WRS Residency and Bikaner Agency*; Allahabad, 1908, Vol. III-A, p.25; *Rajasthan District Gazetteer of Jaisalmer* (ed. K.K. Sehgal), Jaipur, 1973, p.86.
61. *Rajasthan District Gazetteer, Jaisalmer, op.cit.*, p.6; see also Tod, *op.cit.*, II, p.1248.
62. Muhnot Nainsi, *Khyat*, Jodhpur, 1962, Vol. II, pp. 57-58; Tod, *op.cit.*, II, p. 1248; *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, pp.211-13.
63. *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, p.68.
64. *Ibid.*, p.136.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Tawarikh, op.cit.*, p.213. For land tax being 1/5 to 1/7 of the gross produce of land. see Tod, II, p.1249.
67. Tod, II, p.1249.
68. M.A. Sherring, *op.cit.*, p.19.
69. Tod, II, p.1
70. *Ibid.*, III, pp. 1309, 1317.
71. For a tradition among Paliwals having their market outside the city walls, see Pallivala Chhand, *op.cit.*, verse 1(a).

APPENDIX - A
(I) INSCRIPTIONS IN C-1

Inscription No.	Year	Caste	Jati	Gotr	Kul	Remarks
01.	Bhattik 763/A.D.1386	Vrahmani	-	-	-	Fixed on the Ground. A male and a female deity. Script very crude.
02.	V.S.1706/A.D.1648	Vaman (Vaudevarsan)	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. Male & female deity. Male wears <i>janeu</i> .
03.	V.S.1727/A.D.1670	-	-	-	-	Fixed on the platform along with no.12. A male & a female deity.
04.	V.S.1743/A.D.1686	-	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. Head broken. Script on-decipherable.
05.	V.S.1745/A.D.1688	-	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform. Caste not mentioned. Three brahmins with <i>janeu</i> .
06.	V.S.1751/A.D.1694	-	Lakhar	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & two female deities.
07.	V.S.1757/A.D.1700	Vrahmani (Narain)	Jisutiya dehli (agriculturist)	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity.
08.	V.S.1758/A.D.1701	(a) - (b) Sutradhar (Dhanmogh)	-	-	-	Fixed Inside a miniature temple. Ins. on a polished fine quality stone. A male & two female deities.
09.	V.S.1760/A.D.1703	Vrahman (Padhalalsat)	Kudhara	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity.
10.	V.S.1705/A.D.1706	-	Kuldhara	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity. Script Illegible.

Contd...

11.	V.S.1776/A.D.1719 Vaisakh Sudi	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male deity. Caste not mentioned.
12.	V.S.1777/A.D.1720 Vaisakh Sudi	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform along with no.3. One male & two female deity. Caste mentioned.
13.	V.S.1777/A.D.1720 Vrahman Kuldhari (Heman)	Mudgal	Asamar	-	Fixed inside a miniature-temple. Ins. on a polished fine quality & light coloured stone. Depiction carved in two panels. In the first a male sits with a prostrate body on a platform & a female stands. In the second are two females.
14.	V.S.1780/A.D.1723 Vaisakh Vadi 2 Mangalwar	Saharan	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity.
15.	V.S.1780/A.D.1723 Vrahman (Mul)	Jag	Gargvi	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity.
16.	V.S.1785/A.D.1728 Magh Sudi 6	Kaldhar Loharthi	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity.
17.	V.S.1853 Phagun Sudi S/Soha 1718/A.D.1796	Harjal	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male with fa-ven & a female deity.
18.	V.S.1853/Phagun Sudi S/Saka 1718/A.D.1796	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity. Illegible.
19.	V.S. illegible Probably 18th A.D.	-	-	-	Square pillar on the ground. A diety with a sword & a shield riding a horse. Caste not mentioned.
(II) INSCRIPTIONS IN C-2					
20.	Bhat.612/A.D.1235 Vrahman	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform. One male & a female deity. Mostly illegible.
21.	V.S.615/A.D.1238	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male deity. Mostly illegible.

Contd...

Inscription No.	Year	Caste	Jati	Gotr	Kul	Remarks
22.	V.S.1506/A.D.1449	Vrahman	-	-	-	Fixed on a large platform. Two dieties. Mostly illegible.
23.	V.S.1567/A.D.1510	-	-	-	-	A high pillar on the ground. Illegible.
24.	Bhat, S.89/A.D.1513	Vrahman	-	-	Gonali	A high pillar. One male diety. Mostly illegible.
25.	V.S.1584/A.D.1527	-	(a) Mudgal	(a) Sutdhana (b) Lahthi	-	Fixed on a large platform along with another stone which is illegible. Two dieties. Partially legible.
26.	V.S.1630/A.D.1573	(Isar Sutkar Mimha) (i.e. Isar s/o Mimha)	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform. Two male dieties. Caste not mentioned. Date inscribed at "Samvat 6130", possibly meant 1630.
27.	V.S.1646/A.D.1589 Vaisakh Sudi	-	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform. Illegible.
28.	V.S.1646/A.D.1589 Vaisakh Sudi 17	-	-	-	-	On a high platform. Two dieties possibly male? Partially legible.
29.	V.S.1682/A.D.1625 Vaisali Sudi	-	-	-	-	On a high pillar. Male & a female diety. Illegible.
30.	V.S.1711/A.D.1654 Vaisali Sudi 12	-	-	-	-	Below a <i>Chhatra</i> and along with Ins. nos. 31 & 32. A male & a female diety. Caste not mentioned.
31.	V.S.1711/A.D.1654 Vaisakh medi 12 Var son	-	-	-	-	-do-
32.	V.S.1711/A.D.1654 Vai.....di 12	-	-	-	-	-do-

Inscription No.	Year	Caste	Jati	Gotr	Kul	Remarks
33.	V.S.1711/A.D.1654 Vaisakh Sudi 12 Var son	-	-	-	-	Fixed on a high platform. One male & four female deities. Caste not mentioned.
34.	V.S.1762/A.D.1705 Vaisali Sudi 15 Var Sukh	Vrahman	Kuldhara	Gago	-	Fixed on the ground. One male & a female deity.
35.	V.S.1762/A.D.1705	Vrahman	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity. Partially legible.
36.	V.S.1762/A.D.1705	-	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female. Illegible.
37.	V.S.1765/A.D.1708	-	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity. Caste not mentioned.
38.	V.S.1765/A.D.1708	-	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female. Caste not mentioned.
39.	V.S.1765/A.D.1708	Vrahman	Sutnani	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity. Inscription starts with mark:
40.	V.S.1768/A.D.1711	Vrahman	Kuldhara	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity. Mentions the post: "Mahajal Lelan" It is on the same platform on which is Ins.46.
41.	V.S.1773/A.D.1716	Vrahman	Kalsar	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female. Inscription starts with mark :
42.	V.S.1835/Saka 1700/	Vrahman	Lakhar	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity. partially legible.
43.	V.S.1861/A.D.1804	-	-	-	-	Fixed on a large platform along with Ins. Nos.44, 45, 47, 48. Caste not mentioned crown broken.

Contd...

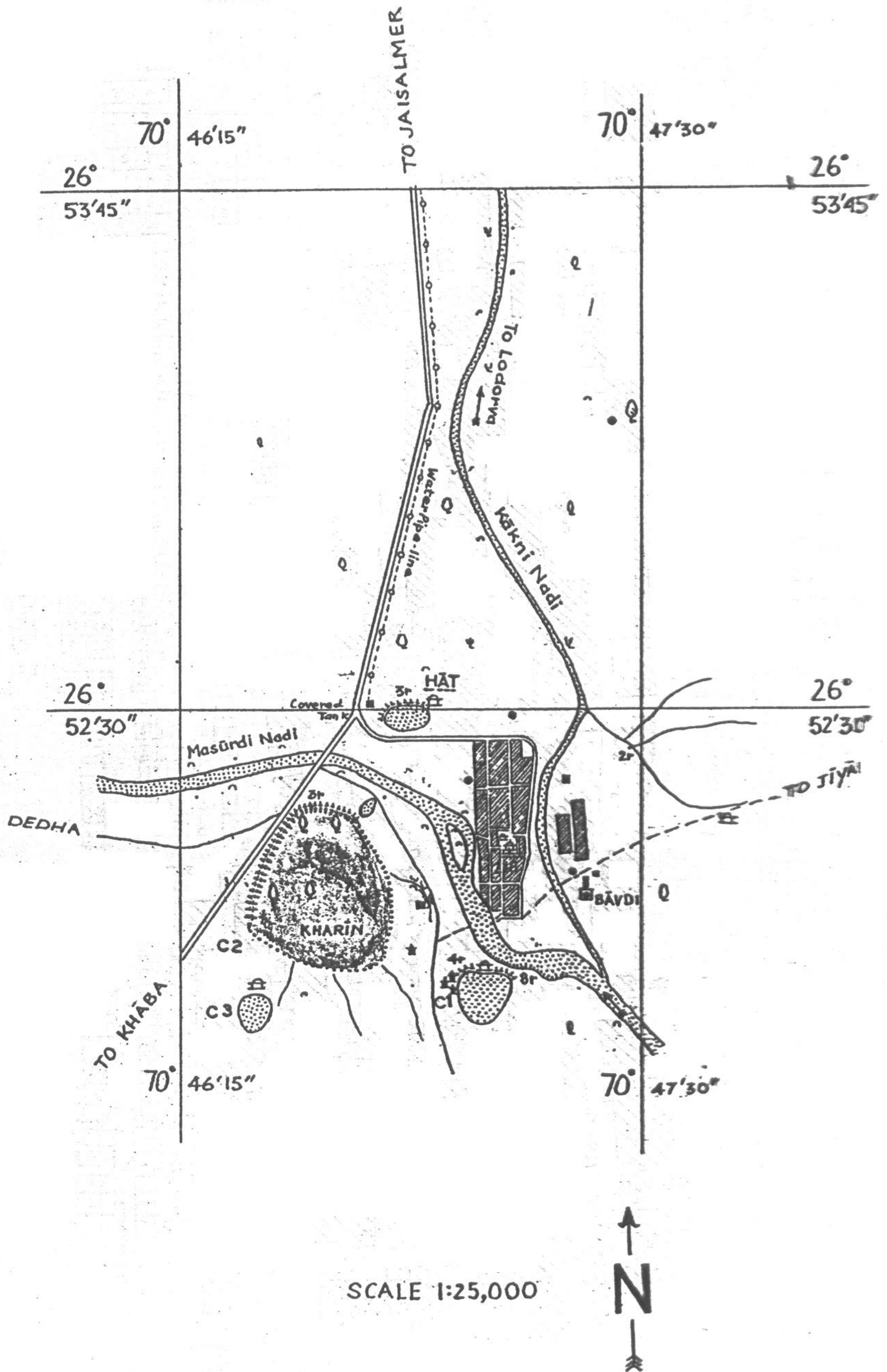
Inscription No.	Year	Caste	Jati	Gotr.	Kul	Remarks
44.	V.S.1861/A.D.1804	-	Kuldhara	-	-	On the same platform as Ins. No.43. A male & a female deity.
45.	V.S.1864/A.D.1807	-	(a) Kuldhara (b) Harjahu (wife)	-	-	On the same platform as Ins. No.43. A male & a female deity.
46.	V.S.1861/A.D.1804	Vrahman	Harjahuni	-	-	Fixed on the same platform as Ins. No.40. A male & a female deity.
47.	V.S.1881/A.D.1824	-	-	-	-	Fixed on the same platform as Ins. Nos.43. A male & a female deity. Caste not mentioned.
48.	V.S.1881/A.D.1824	-	Kuldhara	-	-	Fixed on the same platform as Ins. No.43. A male & a female deity.
49.	V.S.1891/A.D.1834	Vrahman	Harjal	-	-	Fixed on a platform & male & a female deity.
50.	V.S.1724/A.D.1667	-	-	-	-	Fixed inside a miniature temple on a polished fine quality & light coloured stone. Quite similar to Ins. No.13. With only one difference. In the first panel, instead of a male, a female sits on the platform with a postrate body. Caste not mentioned.
51.	V.S.1765/A.D.1702	-	Kuldhara	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity.
52.	V.S.1765/A.D.1708	-	Kuldhara	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity.
53.	V.S.1765c/A.D.1700	-	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity. Illegible.

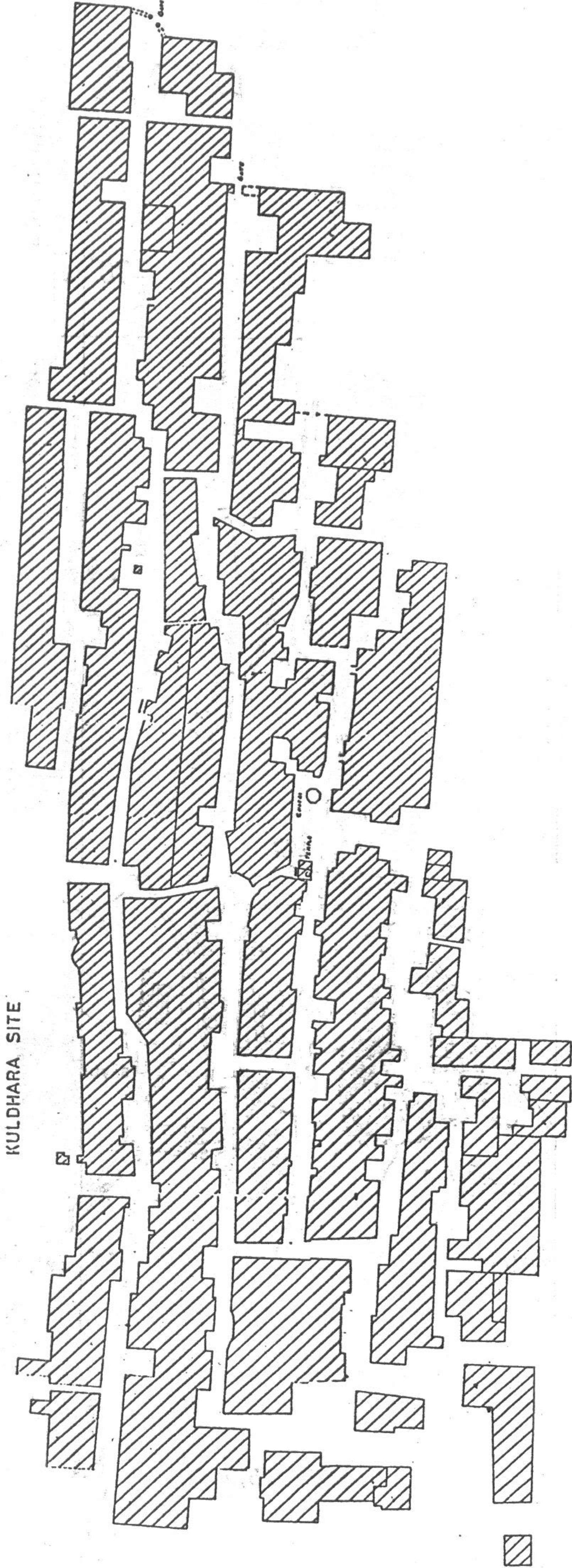
Contd...

(III) INSCRIPTIONS IN C-3

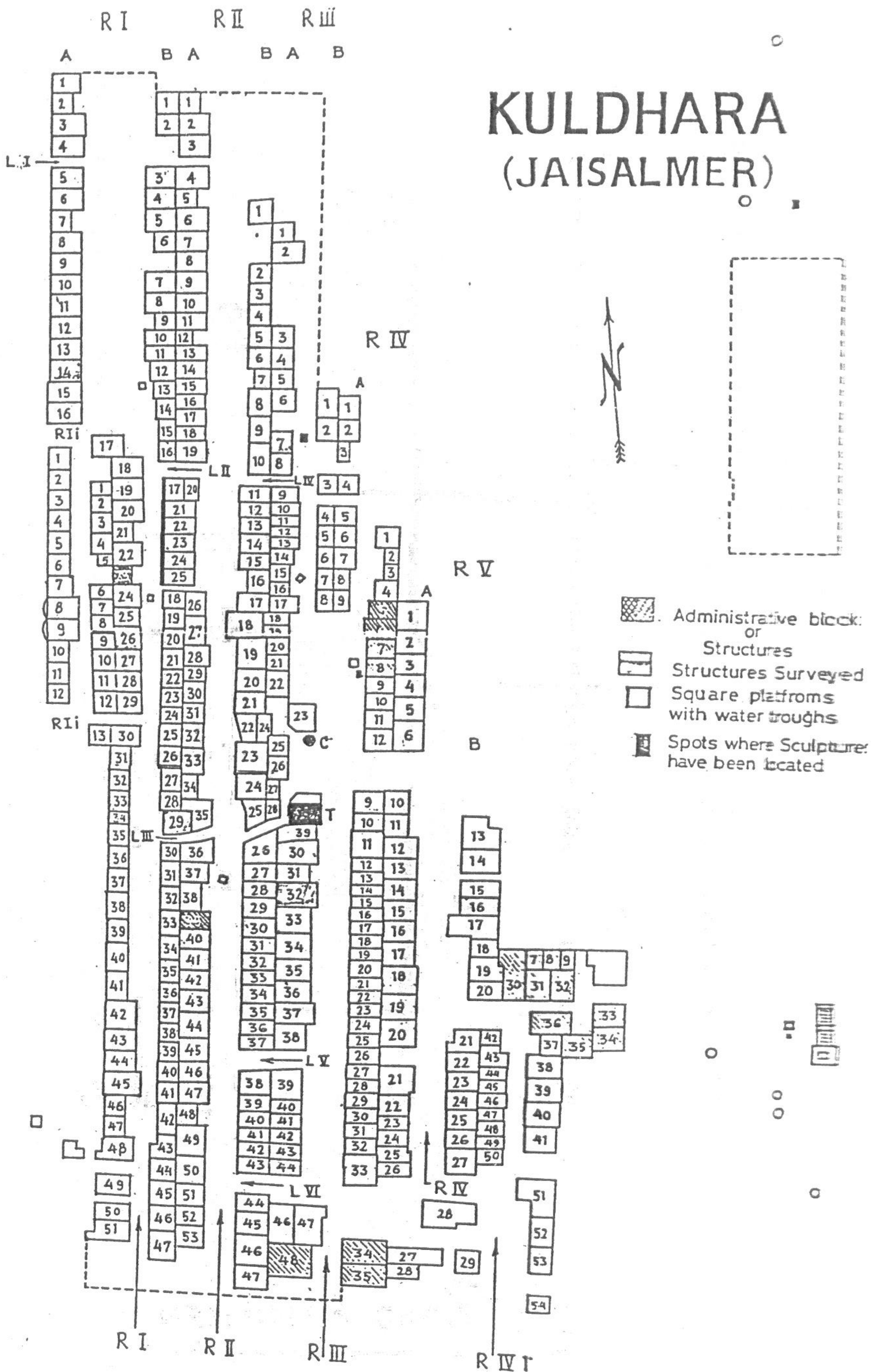
Inscription No.	Year	Caste	Jati	Gotr	Kul	Remarks
54.	V.S.1782/A.D.1725	-	-	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male & a female deity. Caste not mentioned.
55.	V.S.1787/A.D.1730	Vrahman	-	-	-	Fixed on a platform. A male & a female deity. Partially legible.
(IV) INSCRIPTION NEAR THE BAOLI						
56.	V.S.1815/A.D.1757	Vrahman (Tepal)	Kuldhara	-	-	Fixed on the ground. A male deity. Half broken.

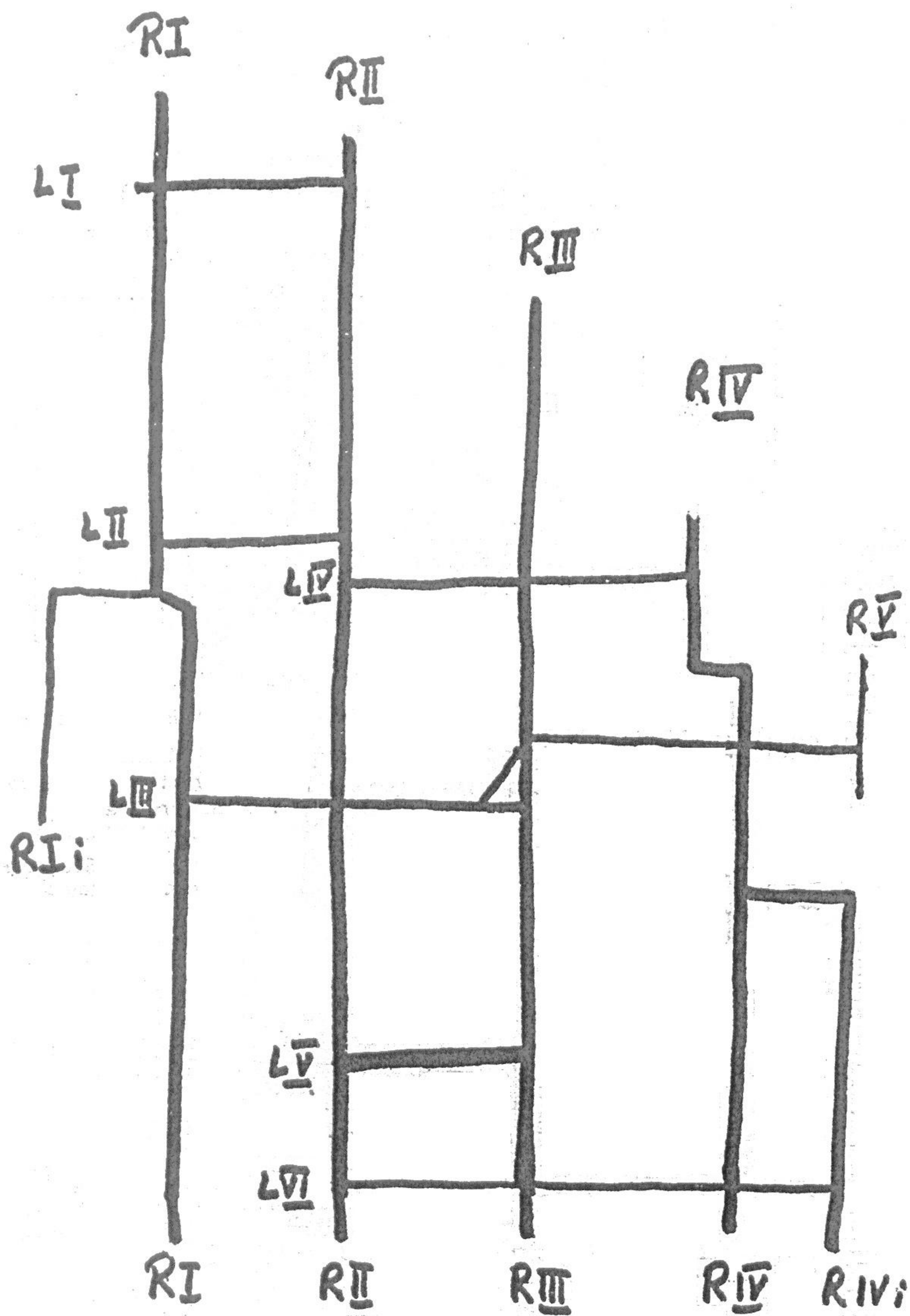
KULDHARA





KULDHARA (JAISALMER)

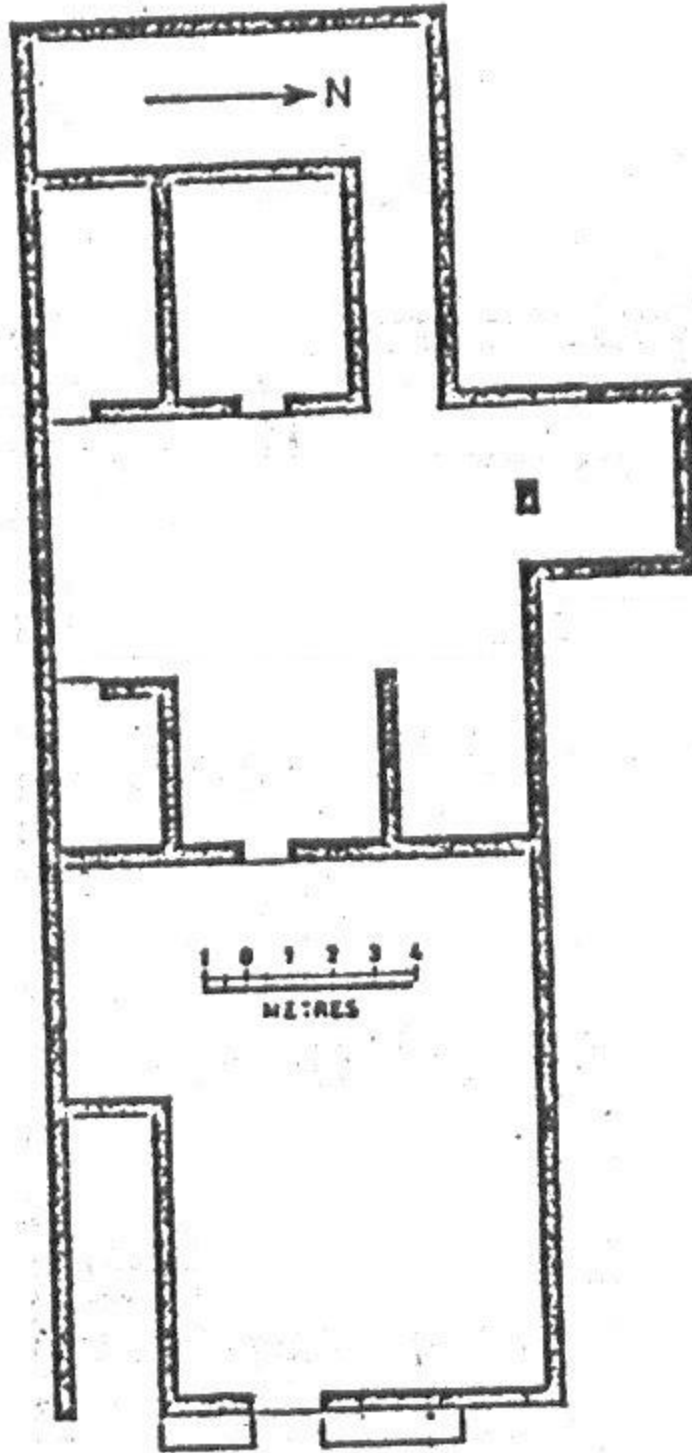




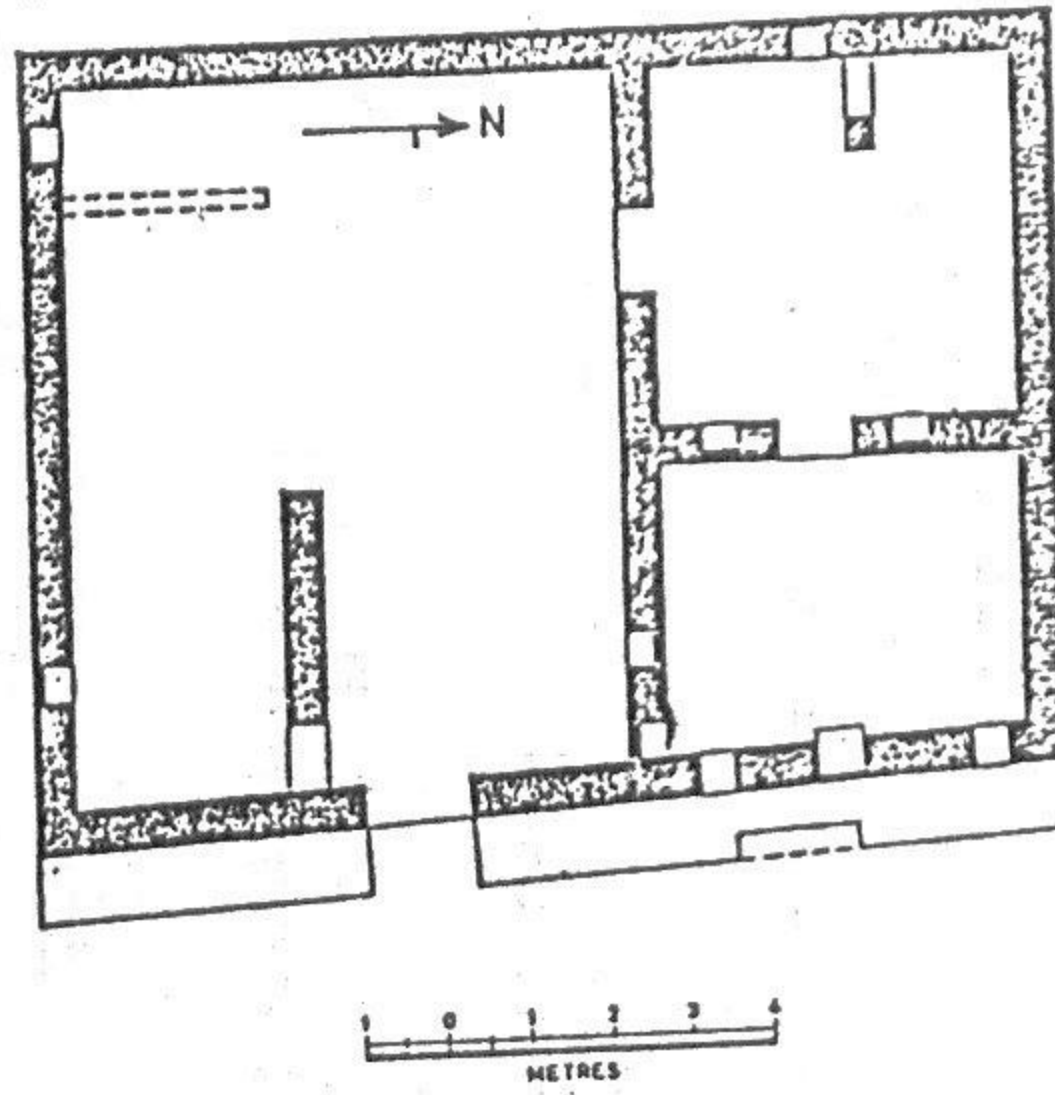
PLAN I: ROAD ALIGNMENTS

STRUCTURES KULDHARA, Distt. Jaisalmer

R.II A-39

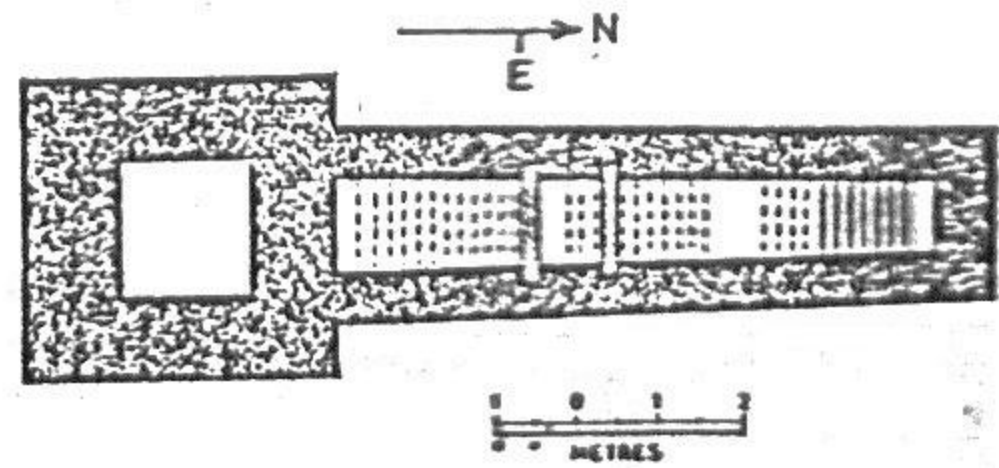
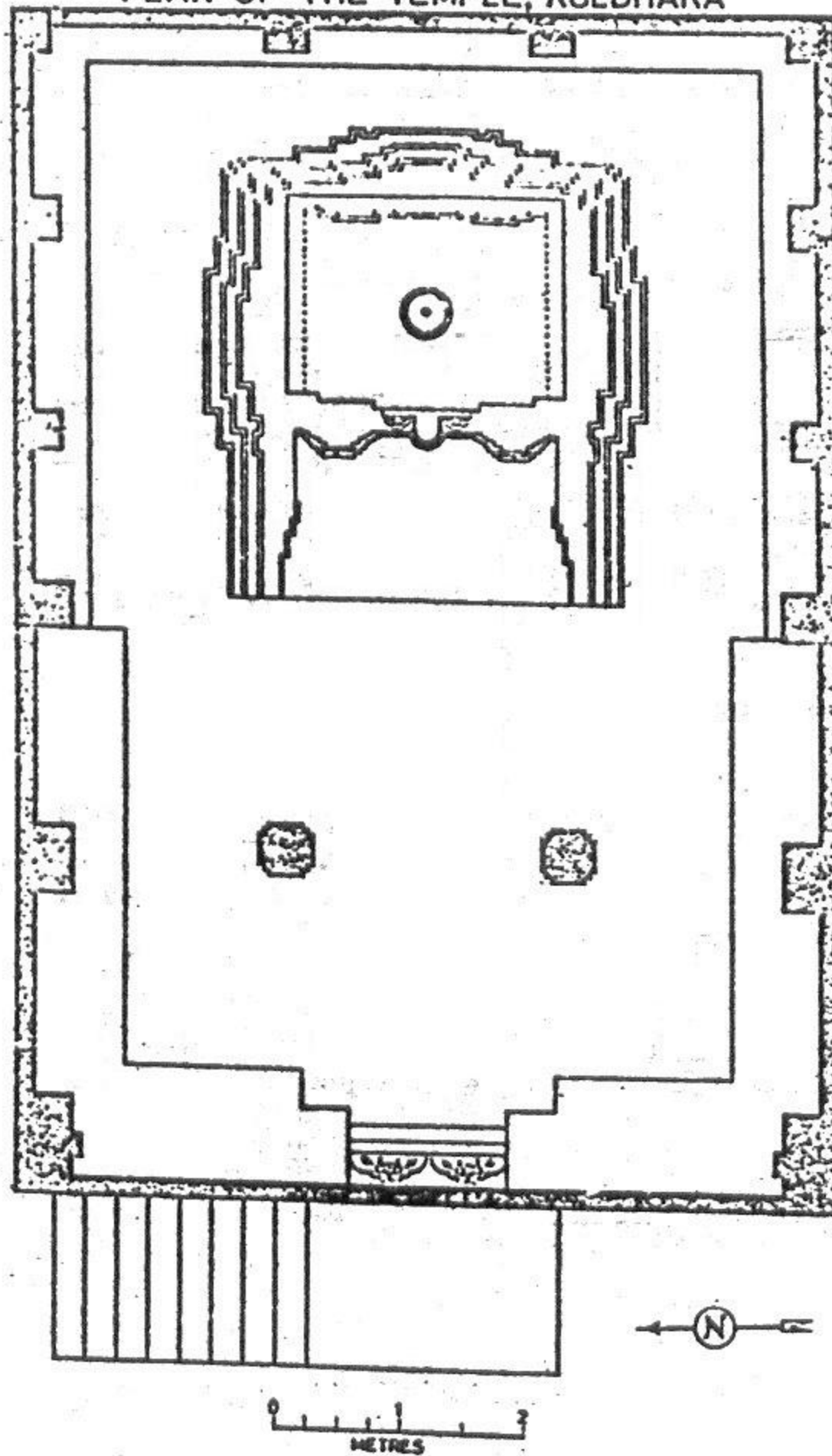


R.III A:32



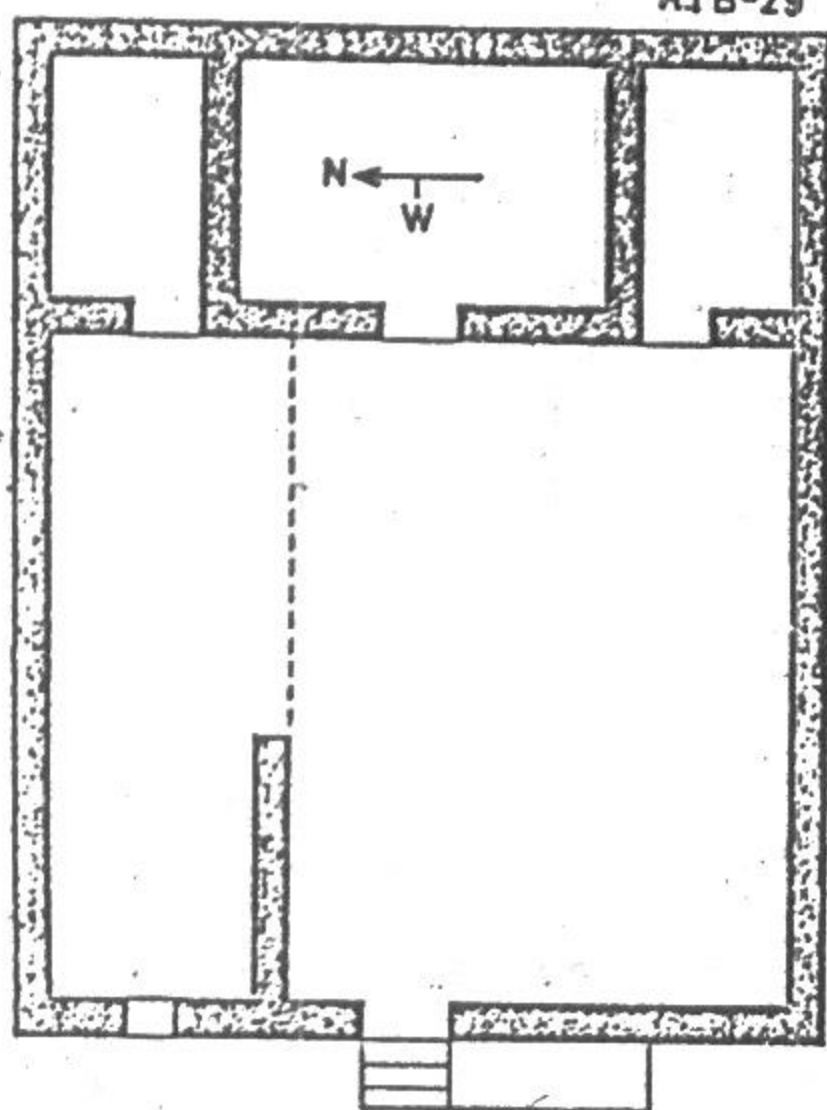
BAOLI KULDHARA, Distt. Jaisalmer

PLAN OF THE TEMPLE, KULDHARA



STRUCTURES
KULDHARA Distt. Jaisalmer

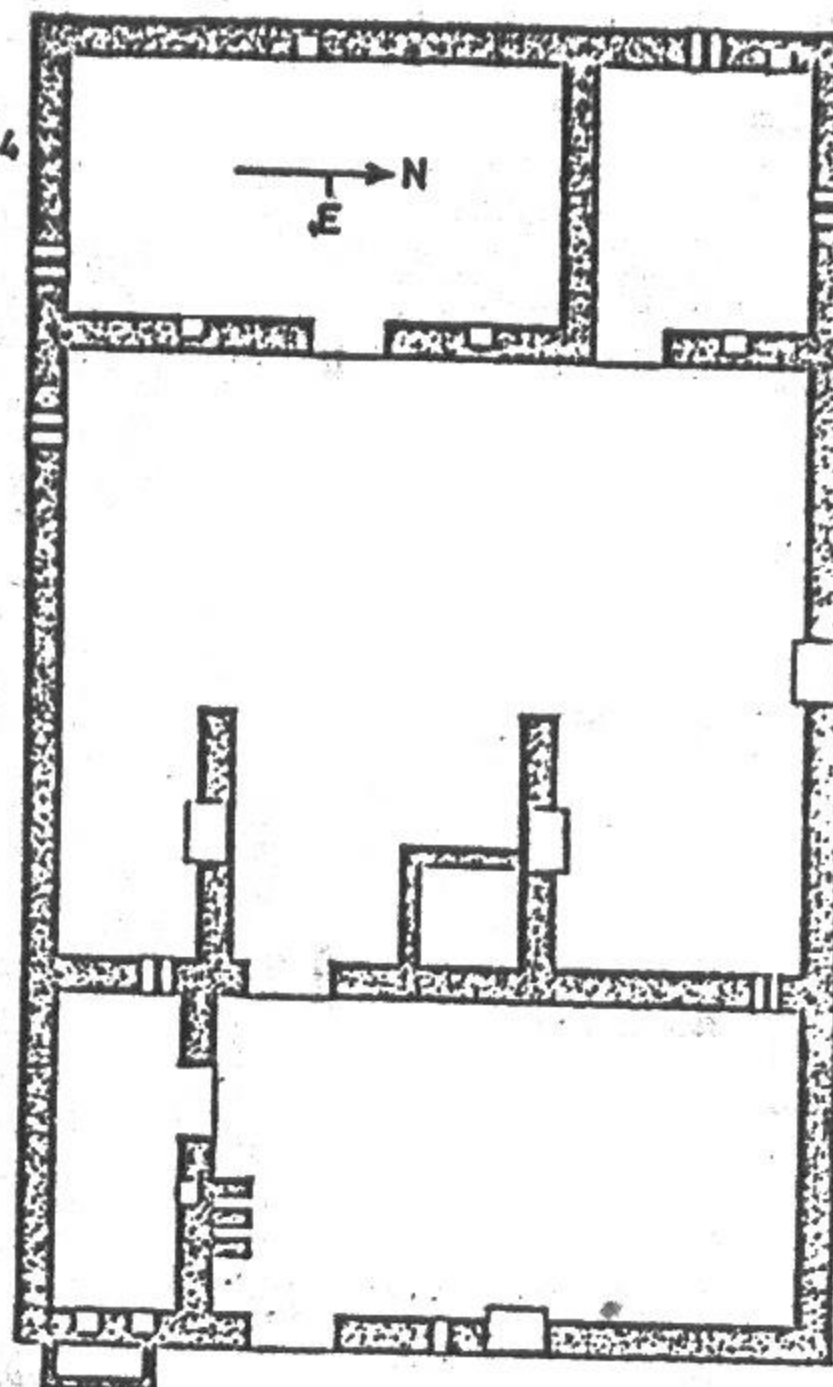
RJB-29



RIA-34



RIA-26

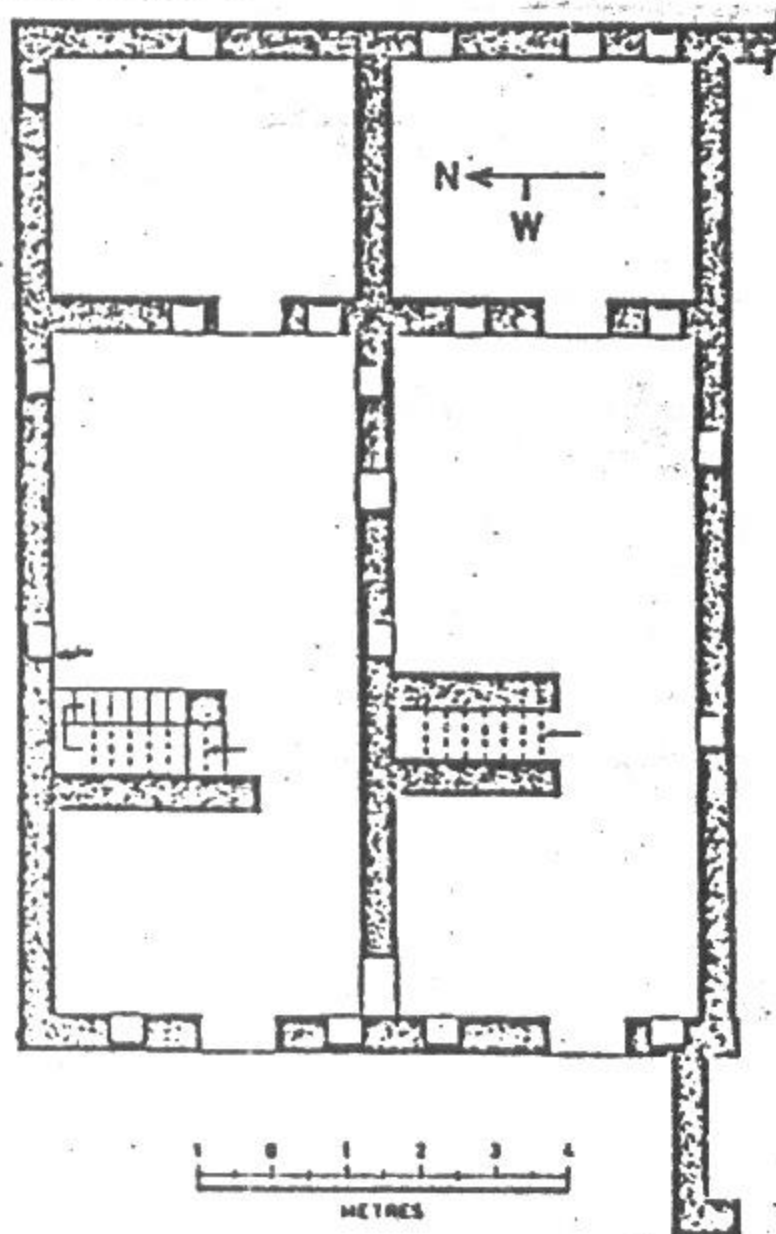


METRES

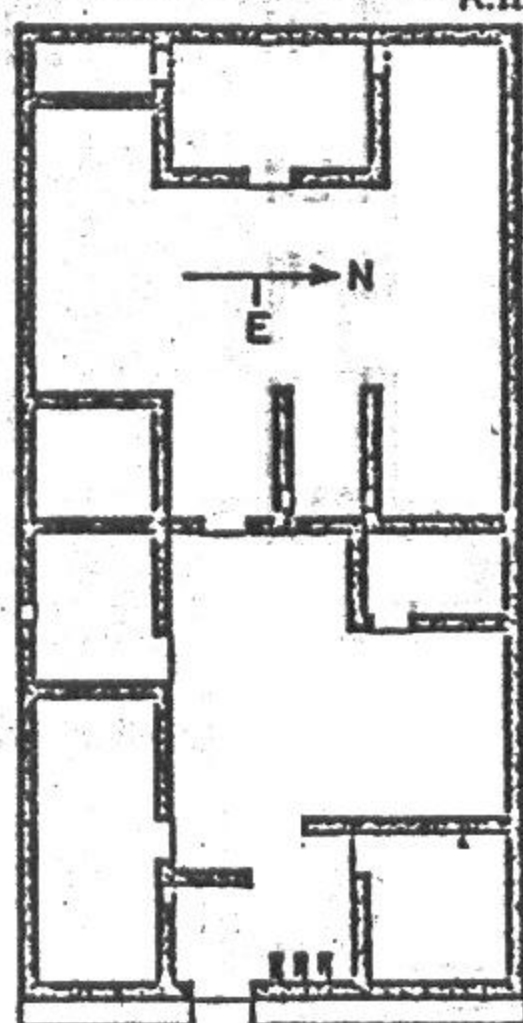
STRUCTURES
KULDHARA Distt. Jaisalmer

RWB-5

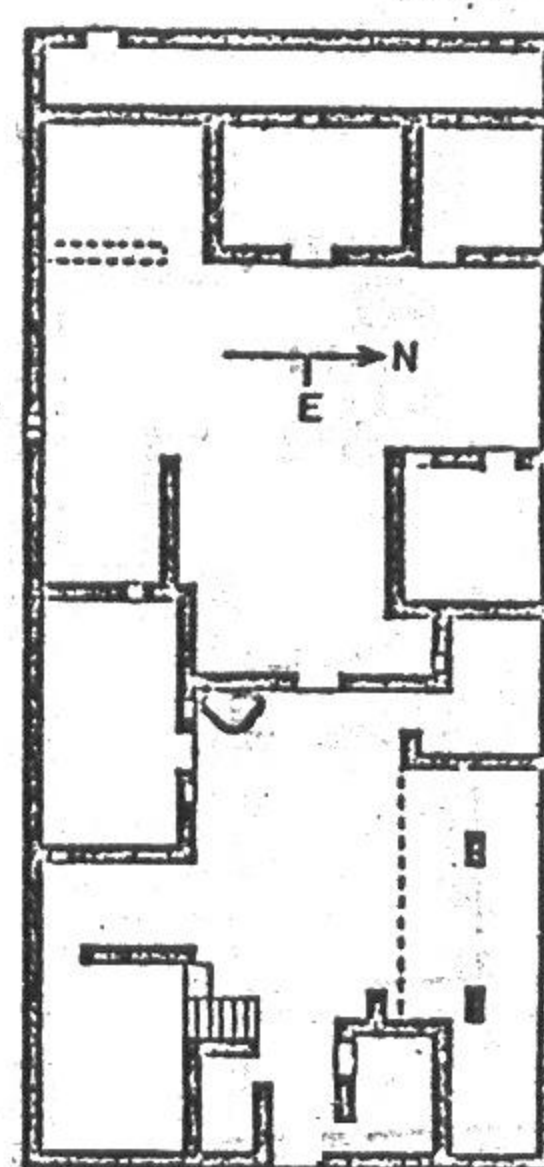
RWB-6



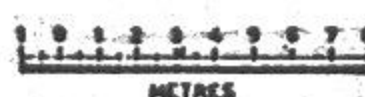
RIA-7



RIA-14



METRES



METRES